

History of the Region, from the Contact Period to the Twentieth Century

Matt C. Bischoff, Joshua M. Protas, and Matthew A. Sterner

Unlike the prehistory of the lower Colorado River region, much is known about its rich and colorful history. The area has been governed by three sovereign nations, Spain, Mexico, and the United States, and still retains much of its Hispanic culture and nature. Understandably, the region's history has been molded and influenced by the Colorado River. The river has served as a transportation conduit, a geographic feature, and the single defining influence in the region's evolving role as an agricultural producer. In this chapter, we present a brief historical overview of the area, focusing on salient topics and issues that shaped the character region.

Arrival of the Spanish

The first Spaniards to explore the lower reaches of the Colorado River were members of the Coronado expedition, just 19 years following the conquest of Mexico. Rumors had circulated throughout New Spain for many years telling of seven cities to the north whose wealth was measured in the golden, jeweled walls of the houses and the gold chalices from which its inhabitants drank. The rumors surrounding these famed cities reached a fever pitch when, in April 1536, Cabeza de Vaca and three men (one a reputed Moorish slave named Esteban) staggered into New Spain. Having been shipwrecked on the east coast of Texas, they made their way overland through the northern territories and reputedly encountered the famed seven cities during their journey.

These reports proved sufficient evidence for the first Spanish viceroy, Antonio de Mendoza, to organize an expedition to search for the famed "Seven Cities of Cibola." Under the command of Francisco Vasquez de Coronado, an expeditionary force consisting of 225 horsemen, 62 foot soldiers, 5 Franciscan friars, and 700 Indian allies departed from Compostela, Nueva Espana, in May 1540, for what would later become the American Southwest. A significantly reduced force finally reached the location reputed to be the famed cities in July of that year, but encountered no more than subsistence-level Indian villages at Zuni. Coronado dispatched scouting parties to search further for the rumored seven cities, but these efforts also proved disappointing (Fontana 1994:25).

In order to supply the overland expedition, Coronado sent out a seaborne party under the command of Captain Hernando de Alarcon to embark from the west coast of New Spain in two ships, the *San Pedro* and the *Santa Catalina*. Sailing north to Culiacan, Alarcon gained a third vessel, the *San Gabriel*. Geographic knowledge of the area, in part provided by Cabeza de Vaca, indicated that the western coast of New Spain ran roughly north-south. By paralleling the northerly march of Coronado's overland force, Alarcon planned to track their movements and position his ships to resupply Coronado by sea (Figure 14). However, it soon became apparent to Alarcon that he was sailing north by west rather than due north, situating him ever farther from Coronado and his troops.

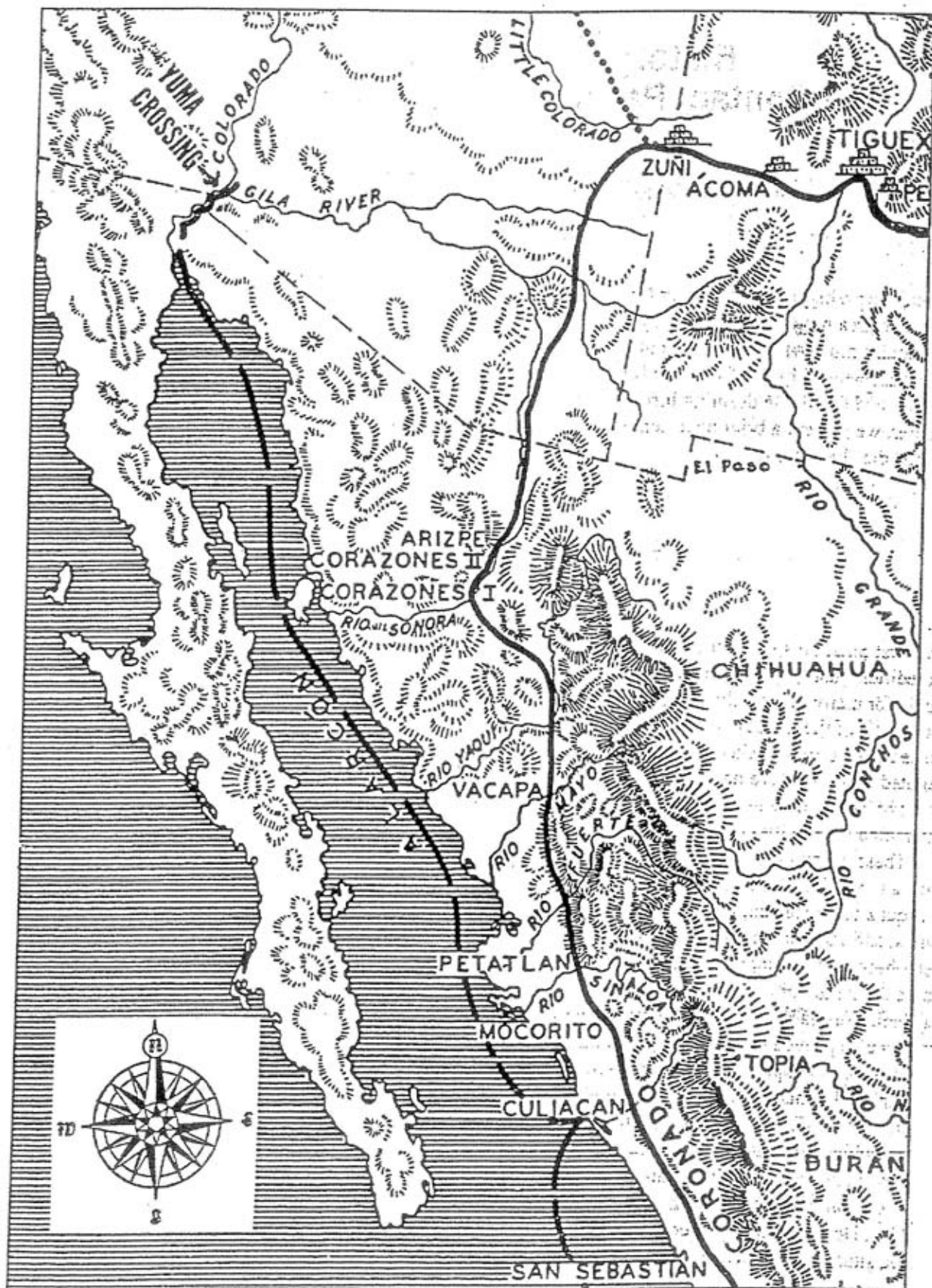


Figure 14. Routes of the Coronado and Alarcon expeditions (adapted from Martin 1954).

For three months Alarcon followed the coast of New Spain, porting frequently to gather news of Coronado's location. With no word from the expeditionary force, he continued until he reached the mouth of the Colorado River, naming his discovery Rio de Buena Guia (River of Good Guidance). Alarcon attempted to navigate the Colorado River, but found that his large ships could make little headway against the strong current of the river. Undaunted and single-minded in pursuit of his mission, he outfitted two smaller ships to investigate upriver.

The first natives to encounter Alarcon's party were reportedly the Cocopah (Martin 1954:19). In his diary, Alarcon describes the natives as tall and powerful men, many of whom had painted their faces, some with designs, while others had plain black paint. He reported that they wore no clothing other than a girdle around their waists, with a feather tail and an elaborate hat of feathers. "Some have their noses pierced," he added, "and from them hang pendants or shells. . . . Their bodies are branded by fire; their hair is banged in front but in the back it hangs down to the waist. The women go around naked except that, tied in front and behind, they wear large bunches of feathers, colored and glued." (Martin 1954:19)

Captain Alarcon established friendly relations with all of the Indians he encountered, and eventually worked his way upriver until he reached the confluence of the Colorado and Gila Rivers, establishing him as the first European ever to set eyes on the Yuma Crossing. There, Alarcon encountered the Yuma (Quechan), who used reed rafts to ferry themselves across the Colorado River. He lingered at the Yuma Crossing for two months and erected a huge wooden cross to alert Coronado's force of his presence. As his patience and supplies diminished, however, he finally left the Quechan and headed down river to his anchored fleet. Shortly after Alarcon's departure, a group from Coronado's expeditionary party led by Melchior Diaz reached the Yuma Crossing, only to find the messages buried by Alarcon at the foot of the cross.

Coronado found no great cities of gold in the northern territories, and Spanish interest in the area quickly faded. Although in the 1580s the Spaniards resumed exploration of the region that would be known as the Southwest, the next group of Europeans to visit the Yuma area came after Philip II commissioned Don Juan de Oñate to conquer and settle New Mexico in 1595. Oñate had established a colony north of present-day Santa Fe by 1598 and soon began sending expeditions to explore the lands to the west. Oñate himself went on one such expedition to search for the South Sea and its rumored pearl fisheries and harbor. The members of the expedition passed through the Yuma Crossing on their way to the Gulf of California, which they reached in January 1605. Soon after his return to New Mexico, however, Oñate was replaced as governor and the route to the sea was abandoned.

The Mission System

No other Europeans ventured into the lower Colorado region area for almost 100 years. To the east, the Spanish concentrated their efforts in settling the New Mexico area, which led to the revolt of the Pueblo Indians during 1680. The Spanish were only temporarily displaced, however, and resecured the area in 1692. The Spanish determined that a stronger foothold would be secured if native peoples could be Christianized. The Jesuits were given the task of expanding the Spanish frontier west of New Mexico into the vast territory known as the Pimería Alta. This area roughly encompassed what is now northern Sonora and southern Arizona. The best-known and most-effective missionary to explore the Pimería Alta was Father Eusebio Francisco Kino, who arrived in the area in 1687.

Father Kino established a base in Sonora and instituted a chain of auxiliary missions extending to the north. Kino rarely remained in one place long, and personally explored much of the land within the Pimería Alta and westward. During 1699, Kino explored the Gila River; during the following year he led an expedition of 10 Indians and 60 pack animals to the Gulf of California (Figure 15). His main objective was to establish a suitable land route from the Pimería Alta to the newly established Jesuit missions in Baja California. Like most of his predecessors who had traveled through the area, Kino named the



Kino's detailed maps and observations from his explorations provided much new information about the geography of the area. However, after Kino's opening of the Pimería Alta, the Yuma Crossing remained at the northern edge of the Spanish frontier and was not visited again by Europeans for several

decades. During 1767, the Jesuits were expelled from Mexico and their missionization efforts were turned over to the Franciscans. In response to the perceived threat of Russian expansion from Alaska, missionary work was soon resumed in California. By 1770, the settlements of San Diego and Monterey had been established in California, and the Spaniards were eager to find an overland route to connect them with the outposts located in the Pimería Alta (Doyle et al. 1984:21).

The Opening of the Region

The first organized expedition to find an overland route to California was led by Juan Bautista de Anza, Captain of the Tubac presidio, and Father Francisco Garcés, a missionary from San Xavier del Bac who earlier had traveled along the Gila and Colorado Rivers between 1768 and 1771. The expedition departed Tubac in January 1774 with 34 men, including Anza, Fathers Garcés and Juan Díaz, an O'odham interpreter, servants, soldiers, muleteers, and a carpenter (Fontana 1994:159). The expedition had originally planned to follow the Gila Trail, well known to Garcés, but was soon set upon by an Apache raiding party that took many of the expedition's horses and pack mules. Anza decided to forgo the Gila Trail and follow a more southerly route in hopes of replenishing his supplies at the missions. Though the hazards of the southern route were well known and documented by Kino (one long stretch was known as the Camino del Diablo), this passage was shorter and offered the hope of fresh provisions.

Although they never replaced their lost horses, Anza's expeditionary force somehow reached the confluence of the Colorado and Gila Rivers. The large Indian village that Kino had named San Dionisio was gone, as was his *visita*. It is unclear whether the Quechan were making their home at the Yuma Crossing, but they arrived on the scene quickly with the appearance of the Spaniards. The Quechan chief, Olley-quotequeibe, baptized as Salvador Palma, was impressed by Anza and his party and assisted the Spaniards in crossing the river. Once across the river, the Spaniards climbed the hill due west of the Yuma Crossing to survey the grandeur of the scene. They named this point de la Concepción, the location where Garcés would establish a mission six years later.

The success of this expedition and renewed concerns about Russian and English expansion into Alta California prompted plans for an overland journey to bring new colonists to the Spanish settlements in the region. In 1775, Anza was ordered to organize a large party of colonists and escort them to Monterey, California. The expedition that left San Miguel de Horcasitas, Sonora, for California included 240 people, 140 pack mules, 340 saddle animals, and 302 cattle, in addition to the various other commodities needed for a journey of some 1,500 miles across desert and mountainous terrain (Fontana 1994:164).

Palma and the Quechan again welcomed Anza and helped the expedition cross the Colorado with no loss of person or property. Before continuing on to California, the expedition left fathers Garcés and Eixarch at the Quechan villages along the Colorado. Padre Eixarch enlisted the help of Quechan men and constructed a tiny cabin on top of Concepción. Garcés parted ways with Eixarch, his six servants, and interpreters (who stayed at the Yuma Crossing to minister to the Indians) and departed in search of a more northerly route between Santa Fe and the coast (Martin 1954:56). After safely bringing the colonists to Monterey, Anza led a smaller group to explore the San Francisco Bay area. Anza again passed through the Yuma Crossing on his return trip to Sonora and brought back Father Eixarch. Father Garcés returned later to the Yuma Crossing and then went on to the mission at San Xavier del Bac (Fontana 1994:164).

In 1779, Teodoro de Croix was appointed the new commandante-general of the interior provinces of New Spain. De Croix's predecessor, Viceroy Bucareli, had recognized the strategic importance of the Yuma Crossing, and for years had urged that a strong force be established there on a permanent basis. Bucareli had been particularly impressed by his meeting with Chief Palma of the Quechan, who had

earlier accompanied Anza on a trip to Mexico City. Bucareli supported establishing missions and a colony on the Colorado River to secure a Spanish presence in the region (Officer 1987:55). De Croix, however, did not heed the advice of Bucareli, and dispatched fathers Garcés and Díaz with a force of only 12 ragged, poorly equipped soldiers to establish a firmer hold over the Yuma Crossing. Although Garcés was welcomed and accepted by Palma and the Quechan, this was a significant affront to the sensibilities of the Quechan. Palma, during his visit to Mexico City with Anza, had received guarantees from the viceroy himself that the Yuma Crossing would serve as the site of a large Spanish mission and presidio. Nonetheless, Garcés and Díaz were cordially accepted and began the construction of a small log-and-mud hut on the west side of the Colorado River that would serve as Mission La Purísima Concepción (later the site of Fort Yuma). Several other single-room structures were built to house the padres, the soldiers, and their families, and a small guardhouse was constructed. Díaz then proceeded north, and constructed a small building to serve as Mission San Pedro y San Pablo de Bicuñer, in the vicinity of what is now Laguna Dam (Porretta 1977; Yates 1972).

The great promises of the Spanish to the Quechan had turned out to be hollow: no grandiose mission had materialized, no presidio had been built, and only a few ragged Spanish soldiers had arrived. The Quechan were growing increasingly impatient with the promises of the Spanish and relations continued to deteriorate. The soldiers who were forced to live among the Quechan grew openly contemptuous of them and flagrantly mocked Indian rights and customs. They seized the most fertile lands for themselves and turned Spanish horses out to graze on the Indians' crops. In addition, the Spanish crowded the Quechan out of the mission building itself during mass, forcing them to stand in the sun without even the protection of the ramada (Martin 1954:64-65).

Quechan ill will toward the Spaniards was on the rise when Spanish soldiers finally arrived in 1781. A total of 40 troopers (with their families and children) and 40 families of colonists (who were continuing on to California) arrived under the command of Captain Rivera y Moncado, who was to act as comandante. Moncado's overt contempt for the "savage" Quechan culminated in his policy of whippings for any opposition to the authority of the Spanish. On July 17, 1781, just one month after the arrival of the Spanish troops, the Quechan had endured enough; Palma and his warriors burned the Bicuñer and Concepción missions and massacred more than 100 Spaniards, including the four priests and the recently arrived troops. The surviving men, women, and children were taken captive (Martin 1954:65).

News of the Yuma Crossing massacre quickly reached the missions to the east and, finally, Mexico City. This time de Croix acted swiftly, ordering Lieutenant Colonel Don Pedro Fages and 100 men to return to the Yuma Crossing, capture and kill the warring chiefs, recover the remains of the slain padres, and bargain for the return of the captured Spaniards. After several skirmishes with the Quechan, Fages successfully obtained the release of some of the hostages, but did not succeed in capturing or killing any of the Quechan chiefs or in resecuring the Yuma Crossing, which remained in the hands of Palma and the Quechan. Spanish officials later placed the blame for the Yuma Crossing massacre on Anza and Garcés, who they claimed had overstated the friendliness of the Quechan and the value of the Yuma Crossing area for settlement. The officials' negative assessment of the area and its inhabitants was used to justify the decision not to reestablish the destroyed missions. Others have argued, however, that responsibility for the tragic incident at the Yuma Crossing should fall upon Teodora de Croix, who failed to adequately provide for the establishment and protection of the missions. No matter who was to blame, the 1781 massacre effectively closed the Yuma Crossing as a Spanish transportation route (Chapman 1921:338-339; Santiago 1998:168-170).

In later years, the Spaniards attempted to find another overland route between the Pimería Alta and California, but with little success. In 1785, an expedition was led by Fages to find a route from Baja California to Sonora by crossing the Colorado River below the Yuma Crossing. This effort was quickly stopped in 1786 when Viceroy Bernardo de Gálvez ordered that contact with the tribes of the Colorado River area be discontinued in order to concentrate all of the Spanish forces in their campaign against the Apache. Ten years later, renewed interests in an overland route inspired José Joaquín de Arillaga, the

lieutenant governor of California, to lead an expedition to the mouth of the Colorado River from Baja California, where several Dominican missions had been established. However, after skirmishes with Kamia Indian groups further northwest, the expedition decided to return to California. In the report of his trip, Arillaga noted the continued hostility of the Indians along the Colorado and recommended that, if a road between Sonora and California were to be maintained, a presidio at the mouth of the Colorado should be established to provide protection to travelers. Arillaga's recommendation was never followed; his expedition appears to have been the last serious attempt by the Spaniards to establish a route through the region (Forbes 1965:233; Santiago 1998:174).

For the remainder of the Spanish period, land connections between Sonora and California were maintained over the Mojave Trail, some 130 miles to the north of the Yuma Crossing (Swanson and Altschul 1991:27). The Mojave Trail remained popular long after the end of Spanish rule in 1821 and continued to be among the most frequently used overland routes throughout the period of Mexican rule. Interest in reopening the Yuma Crossing resurfaced, however, during the 1820s. Jose Figueroa, appointed as military commander of Sonora in 1824, was charged with examining the mines of northern Sonora and reestablishing the more southerly land route to California. During an expedition to the Colorado River in 1825, Figueroa met with the Quechan and reported that the tribe asked to establish relations with the Mexicans. Following this favorable response, Lieutenant Romulado Pacheco led a small party consisting of five soldiers and thirty Indians to the area around the Yuma Crossing and spent a month establishing a post among the Quechan during the winter of 1826. This post was apparently planned as a military garrison to secure the Yuma route. The location of the post is unknown, but references to the site of the former Mission La Concepción in the party's correspondence suggest that Pacheco's post was possibly on the same location. It is also unclear whether Pacheco ever built any structures for the post during his brief stay. Shortly after his arrival, a wave of Indian unrest in southern California and Sonora contributed to worsening relations with the Quechan, and Pacheco left the area. Mexican plans for maintaining the land route through the Yuma Crossing were soon forgotten (Forbes 1965:246-249).

The next group of non-Indians to return to the Yuma Crossing area were Anglo-Americans on the front line of the push westward. Accounts suggest that as early as the 1820s, several parties of trappers traveled down the Gila River and along the Colorado River in search of beaver pelts (Doyle et al. 1984:27-28; Swanson and Altschul 1991:27). Among those reported to have passed through the area of the Yuma Crossing at this time were Sylvester Pattie, James Ohio Pattie, and Pauline Weaver (Robertson 1942:26). The trappers exploited the resources of the Gila and Colorado Rivers to exhaustion, and some continued west into California. Although "misunderstandings" were often common between the trappers and Mexican authorities, who feared the intrusion of the Anglos, few violent encounters occurred. By the time of the Mexican-American War of 1846-1848, an Anglo-American presence in the area had been established.

The Lower Colorado Region in the Nineteenth Century

Anglo-American Arrival at the Yuma Crossing

The next recorded Anglo-American entry into the Yuma area was made by Christopher (Kit) Carson, who first crossed the Colorado River at the Gila River in October 1846. Carson was acting as a dispatcher, carrying the communications of John Charles Fremont from California to Washington. The shortest, fastest route at that time led through Mexican territory (via the Gila Trail), crossing the Colorado River at the Yuma Crossing. However, Carson did not complete his trip to Washington. By late November he

returned to the Yuma Crossing, leading Colonel Stephen Watts Kearney and the "Army of the West" to San Diego.

The Gila Trail, which followed the Gila River to the Colorado River at the Yuma Crossing, proved to be one of the primary travel routes for American troops fighting in the Mexican-American War. Although the terrain was rugged and desolate, it was by far the quickest route between the settlements of Oklahoma, New Mexico, and California. It was over this route that Carson led Col. Kearney and his troops in 1846. Kearney's support troops, a force called the Mormon Battalion (led by Lt. Col. Philip St. George Cooke), found the rigors of the Gila Trail unsuitable for the heavy and cumbersome wagons that they were forced to draw and forged a new wagon route as they traveled. The Gila Trail was later incorporated into the Southern Overland Trail to California (Walker and Bufkin 1979:40). American troops came to the Yuma Crossing again in 1848, when the U.S. First Dragoons were called from Monterey, Mexico, to perform garrison duty in California. The troops used a rope ferry to cross the Colorado (Doyle et al. 1984:38).

The end of the Mexican-American War was marked by the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, in which the Gila River and the Yuma Crossing figured prominently. The Republic of Mexico ceded control of the territory today encompassing Texas, California, New Mexico, and part of Arizona (north of the Gila River) for \$18,250,000 in cash payments and claims assumed by the U.S. government (Sheridan 1995:52). In addition, an area on the south side of the Gila River at Yuma (known as the Whipple Strip) that included the Yuma Crossing was acquired by the United States at this time. The work of the United States-Mexico Boundary Commission, established in 1849, is far too complex a story to present within this overview. In sum, the California-Mexico border was surveyed from west to east and continued up to the Gila River. The boundary designation crossed the Colorado River, incorporating the Yuma Crossing into what is now California, and followed the Gila River east. Not long after the boundary survey was undertaken, the U.S. government sought to acquire additional land suitable for a southern transcontinental railroad route. The Gadsden Purchase, ratified by Congress in June 1854, obtained for this purpose nearly 30,000 square miles of what is now southern Arizona from Mexico for the sum of \$10,000,000 (Sheridan 1995:56). During the late 1840s and early 1850s, however, the legal status of much of the newly acquired area remained uncertain, with land claims and disputes arising not only between the United States and Mexico, but also between California and the Territory of New Mexico.

One such land dispute affecting much of the Yuma Valley involved a large tract of land granted to Don Fernando Rodriguez in 1838 by the Treasury General of the state of Sonora (Figure 16). Although no action was taken on this claim when the area came into the possession of the United States (with the Gadsden Purchase), the Algodones Land Grant Company filed suit in the 1890s for the recovery of the lands granted to Rodriguez. The case was heard by a special court of private land claims in Santa Fe, which ruled that the grantee's claim had been legally transferred to the Algodones Land Grant Company. During the time that this claim was in the courts, representatives of the Algodones Land Grant Company sold parcels of land in the Yuma Valley to squatters and new settlers, and private development companies began constructing canals in the hopes of encouraging additional settlement and development of the area. However, in 1898, after an earlier unsuccessful appeal attempt by the U.S. government to regain title to the land in question, the U.S. Supreme Court reversed the earlier court decision on the grounds that the power of the state of Sonora to grant lands had ceased in 1836. At that time, Mexico was divided into states and the power to grant lands lay only with the federal government of Mexico (Robertson 1942:110-111). This ruling denying the claim of the Algodones Land Grant Company had far reaching consequences for the project area in subsequent years. Soon after the denial of the claim, the former grant holdings were reopened to public entry and, in the early twentieth century, many new arrivals settled this area and put much of the land under cultivation (Reclamation 1940:65).

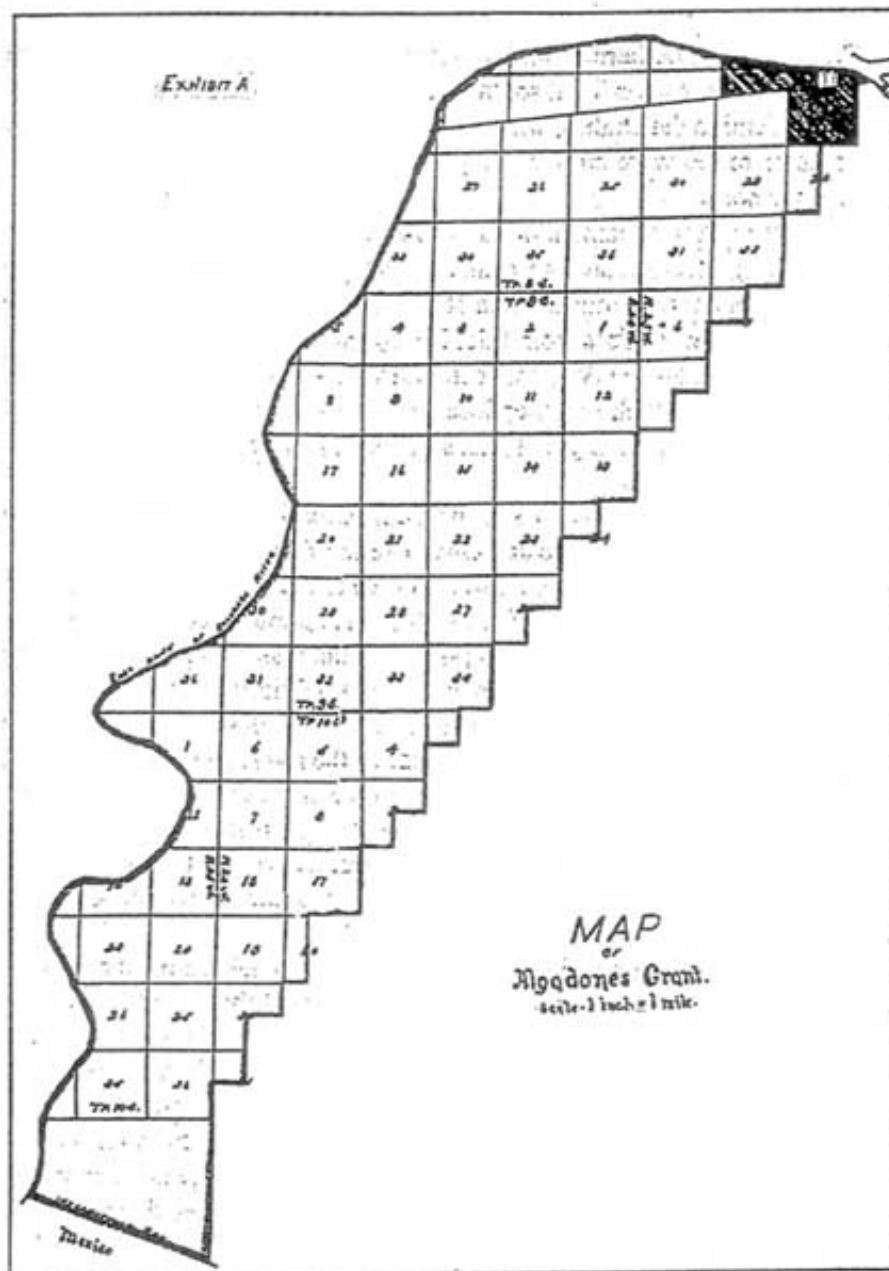


Figure 16. Map of the Algodones Land Grant.

Ferry Service at the Yuma Crossing

The U.S. victory in the Mexican-American war and the discovery of gold in California in 1848 marked the beginning of a period of great change in the Yuma Crossing area. With the onset of the Gold Rush, thousands of emigrants flocked to California with dreams of striking it rich. Since sea passage from New York to San Francisco was long, arduous, and convenient only to those located along the Atlantic coast, the vast majority of the gold seekers used one of the few overland routes. The Humbolt, or Central, route led to the northern reaches of California ending in the Sacramento area. The Spanish Trail and Cooke's Wagon Trail began at Santa Fe and followed more southerly routes, the latter crossing the Colorado

River at the Yuma Crossing. For Southerners and Mexicans, there was a route that began at Chihuahua or San Antonio and joined Cooke's Wagon Trail south of Tucson. Some Mexicans even ventured along Kino's early route on the Camino del Diablo, which also forded the Colorado River at the Yuma Crossing. Generally, the southern routes were more heavily traveled as they avoided the difficult winter weather encountered to the north.

What began as a trickle in 1848 became a flood in 1849, as gold seekers crossed the river in record numbers. U.S. topographic engineer Lieutenant Amiel W. Whipple first surveyed the Yuma Crossing as he mapped the area for the boundary commission in 1849 (Figure 17). At that time, the principal crossings were the "Emigrant Crossing" (across from Pilot Knob) and the "Lower Crossing," which was situated further south (Doyle et al. 1984:43). Whipple continued the California boundary line east across the Colorado River to the Gila River, which was then located in what is now the Gila Slough (Swanson and Altschul 1991:28). As a result, the Crossing was first surveyed as part of California and became known as the "Whipple Strip" (Whipple 1849).

The first official ferry service at the narrows of the Yuma Crossing was operated by Lt. Cave Johnson Coutts, who had first crossed the Colorado at Yuma in 1848 as a member of Walker's dragoons (Martin 1954:130). The following year, Lt. Coutts was ordered to the Yuma Crossing as an escort for the United States-Mexico Boundary Commission. The needs of the boundary commission included frequent excursions on both sides of the Colorado River. To assist the commission, Coutts began a ferry across the Colorado River in September 1849, which was also open to the public for a fee. Coutts placed the operation of the ferry in the hands of a sergeant, while he dealt with the endless stream of "forty-niners" and their tales of hardship and desperation. On the western side of the river, on the same hill where Garcés had established Misión Concepción, Coutts established a camp called Fort Calhoun (Martin 1954:131). The camp, however, lay square in the path of the emigrant trails. Ultimately exasperated by the disagreeable forty-niners, Coutts left the area before the close of the year (Doyle et al. 1984:56). For a short time during December 1849, Mexican representatives of the boundary commission took over the ferry operations (Officer 1987:248).

By early 1850, Dr. Abel B. Lincoln had established another ferry just below the Gila confluence, presumably in the area of the Narrows. Lincoln's ferry was so successful that, in a letter sent to his parents during April of that year, he boasted an income of \$60,000 during the first three-month period. Lincoln's gold mine, however, did not escape the scrutiny of one particularly nasty character named John Glanton, who, with a gang of desperadoes, muscled in on Lincoln's business and placed himself in the position of manager. Glanton quickly raised prices, in addition to robbing and stealing from innocent travelers (Doyle et al. 1984:57; Lingenfelter 1978:1-2). Reports in Mexican newspapers noted that Sonorans returning from the California goldfields were charged higher fares and suffered harassment by the ferry operators at the Yuma Crossing. Mexican officials received complaints from travelers who claimed that the Americans at the ferry had attempted to take their arms and other valuables, in some cases going onto Mexican soil to do so. Little was done at this time, however, to stop the abuses suffered by Mexicans at the Yuma Crossing (Officer 1987:248).

After noticing the lucrative nature of Lincoln's ferry, the Quechan decided to begin their own rope-ferry operation in the spring of 1850. The Indian ferry was run by an Anglo-American renegade named Callaghan (Martin 1954:145). Glanton would not stand for the competition and shot and killed Callaghan, which led to a Quechan retaliation. On April 23, 1850, a group of Indians killed Glanton, Lincoln, and all but three of his operating party (Doyle et al. 1984:57). These three men escaped to San Diego and reported the "unjustified and savage" attack upon their party by the Quechan, fueling the flames with stories of thousands of dollars in silver and gold stolen by the Indians. California newspapers carried long reports of the massacre at the Yuma Crossing, and *Alta California*, a San Francisco newspaper (Martin 1954:149-150), ran a special dispatch that described public reaction to the news:

The news of the murder of Glanton and his companions as it reached the settlements, occasioned as it may supposed, no little excitement. It was not, however, so much for any particular sympathy for the fate of the men who have been slaughtered that public feeling was aroused, for their character was pretty well understood, but it was from the fact that there was known to be at this time several companies of American immigrants descending the Gila and it was thought doubtful as to the treatment they might receive at the hands of the Indians, these last having just had a lap of American blood. Furthermore, the season for the spring immigration from the states by the lower routes was near at hand, and it was thought highly important that something should be done by [the] government for its protection at the Crossing of the Colorado.

Public outcry demanded that some action be taken to regain control of the Crossing. At the order of Governor Burnett, Quartermaster Gen. Joseph C. Morehead assembled a militia force and led them to the Yuma Crossing. The militia failed to control the Quechan and suffered minor casualties in an initial skirmish. Morehead's efforts were thoroughly ineffective and after a month of camping at the Crossing, he returned to California.

The profits to be made from the ferry service at the Yuma Crossing attracted entrepreneurs in spite of the dangers of the region. The first to arrive was a group from San Francisco, led by George Alonzo Johnson, who came to the area during June 1850 with the intention of re-establishing ferry service at the Yuma Crossing. Johnson and his partners ignored Quechan warnings and constructed a stockade of 9-foot-tall, sharpened pikes, inside of which they constructed shelters and dug a saw pit (Martin 1954:155). For unknown reasons, the Quechan did not disturb the new frontiersman, who by August had constructed a 35-foot-long scow from cottonwood trees growing near the river. Johnson's ferry service operated quite successfully, so much so that Johnson began establishing land claims for himself and his friends along the river. Despite his claims, many years would pass before any real settlement began at the Crossing (Doyle et al. 1984:4; Lingenfelter 1978:2).

Securing Peace with the Quechan

In the wake of the militia disaster, U.S. military authorities sent Maj. Samuel Peter Heintzelman with orders to establish a permanent military outpost at the confluence of the Gila and Colorado Rivers. Heintzelman stationed his command below the ferry crossing, calling the location Camp Independence. By March 1851, however, the troops had moved to the site of the old Mission Concepción and named the new camp Fort Yuma (Lingenfelter 1978:2; Martin 1954:157). Not one to be dependent on nonmilitary resources, Heintzelman established his own ferry service in direct competition with the operation already in place. Whether Johnson felt it prudent not to tangle with the U.S. military or was moving on to larger ventures, he decided to sell his interest in the operation and return to San Francisco. All but two of the remaining partners also sold their interests in the ferry line at this time, leaving the proprietorship to Louis J. F. Jaeger and William Ankrum. Shortly thereafter, Ankrum sold out to Jaeger and went into business driving cattle from Mexico to California (Martin 1954:157; Swanson and Altschul 1991:28).

Louis Jaeger operated Johnson's ferry for 27 years and became known as "Don Diego" to those who used his ferry. Jaeger's ferry operation quickly overshadowed the military operation and remained quite profitable until the arrival of the railroad in 1877. Although the flood of immigrants heading west for the Gold Rush declined in the 1850s, the steady Mexican migration into California provided Jaeger with plenty of business. In addition, Jaeger profited from the numerous cattle and sheep herds that he ferried across the river. By the 1860s he had increased the size of his own cattle herds, which he kept at his ranches at San Felipe and Santa Ysabel in California. Jaeger also maintained pastures in the bottomlands

around Yuma for his cattle. He used these stocks to supply beef and dairy products to the military at Fort Yuma (Hargett 1983:341-347).

Lack of supplies and near starvation forced Major Heintzelman and most of his men to leave Fort Yuma to return to California during June 1851. Lieutenant J. W. Sweeney remained with a small group of men to guard the government property that was left behind. Sweeney moved back to Camp Independence along the river bottom for this purpose, but abandoned the camp altogether in December when he encountered Quechan hostilities. Jaeger also left the Yuma Crossing for a short time as a result of injuries he sustained during an attack by the Quechan. The Yuma Crossing was thus temporarily without a military guard and ferry service (Martin 1954:168-169; Swanson and Altschul 1991:31).

Heintzelman returned to the Yuma Crossing in February 1852 with plentiful provisions and an enlarged military force. He was accompanied by Jaeger, who brought new supplies from San Diego to rebuild his ferry operation (Martin 1954:169). After reestablishing Fort Yuma, Heintzelman set about asserting his presence with the Quechan. During the previous year there had been no major flood event, and the Quechan, who practiced floodplain farming, reaped a small harvest in 1852. Heintzelman took advantage of the food shortage and the Quechan's ongoing conflicts with the Cocopah and tribes to the east. He ordered his troops to burn the limited crops and destroy the shelters at the Quechan rancherias in the area of the Yuma Crossing. These efforts deprived the Quechan of vital resources, and by the end of 1852, their resistance to the Anglo control of the Yuma Crossing area ended. It is unclear if there was any type of official treaty or agreement to end the hostilities and sanction the Anglo occupation of traditional Quechan lands (Bee 1981:18).

After his military defeat of the Quechan, Major Heintzelman interfered with the political and social structure of the tribe to ensure their peaceful coexistence with the nascent Anglo settlement. He deposed two of the Quechan leaders for their role in the earlier hostilities and selected a man named Pasqual to take over as the new principal tribal chief. Heintzelman's action established a pattern that significantly changed the traditional Quechan political process, in which tribal chiefs were chosen according to the criteria of dream power, benevolence, bravery, and eloquence. The new hegemonic order required that the primary quality to be exhibited by a chief was his ability to carry out the wishes of the American officials. Apparently Heintzelman's strategy succeeded in subduing the Quechan; there were no more reports of tribal hostilities toward Anglo settlers and the Americans enjoyed unrestricted access to the Yuma Crossing (Bee 1981:18).

The Quechan remained in the area and adapted to the presence of Fort Yuma and the nearby settlements. While some Quechan came to the fort to beg from troops or work menial, low-paying jobs during the 1850s, most of the tribe continued to farm the river bottomlands and maintained their traditional ways. However, as the Euroamerican settlements at the Crossing grew during the 1860s and 1880s, an increasing number of Quechan were drawn to town and found work as janitors, steamer deckhands, servants, and woodchoppers. The Quechan participation in the market economy had a negative impact for some. Members of Yuma's upper class complained of Quechan involvement in gambling, prostitution, and panhandling (Bee 1981:19). Embarrassment was also expressed about the minimal clothing worn in town by many Quechan, and efforts were made to encourage the adoption of a more modest wardrobe (Figure 18). One early Yuma resident remembered an enterprising merchant who bought a large supply of pants from soldiers and miners. He then encouraged the town council to pass an ordinance requiring that trousers be worn at the train depot. The merchant quickly sold his stock of pants at a profit to the Quechan, who apparently were fascinated by the trains and frequently came to see their arrival (Gordon 1990:73).

As time went on and the Quechan peacefully coexisted with the American settlers, the government decided that Fort Yuma was no longer necessary to protect the Yuma Crossing area. However, by the 1880s, local residents and entrepreneurs envied the lush bottomlands farmed by the Quechan and requested that government officials look into setting aside land for a Quechan reservation. After some initial debates over its location, president Chester Arthur finally issued an executive order on March 8,



Figure 18. Cocopah men at the turn of the twentieth century wearing European clothing and playing an introduced card game (from de Williams 1974:31).

1884, that established the Fort Yuma Reservation, consisting of over 45,000 acres located on the west side of the Colorado River, extending north and west of Fort Yuma. Although a sizeable area, the reservation boundaries encompassed only a small portion of the land previously controlled by the tribe. In addition, not all of the reservation was suitable for agriculture, the land closest to the river was fertile, but the soil in other areas was extremely alkaline. Government officials tried to persuade the Quechan to move from their outlying settlements to this new reservation, which was recognized as their only legitimate territory. The creation of the reservation supported the dual government objectives of gaining control of land for use by Anglo farmers, miners, land speculators, and railroad companies, and helping to assimilate the Quechan into mainstream American culture (Bee 1981:19-20).

The peaceful relations with the Quechan following Heintzelman's campaign sparked a wave of Anglo settlement and development of the Yuma Crossing area. In addition, the advent of steamboat travel on the Colorado River during the early 1850s facilitated the transportation of supplies from California to points in the interior West, replacing the less efficient and more expensive overland supply routes. The success of this new supply line enabled the expansion of military bases throughout the Southwest, especially in the years immediately following the Civil War (Swanson and Altschul 1991:31). Thus, with security provided by the military forces stationed at Fort Yuma and supplies brought to the area by steamboat, farmers, miners, ranchers, and merchants began settling the Yuma Crossing area by the late 1850s.